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SUBJECT: AFGHAN, PAKISTANI, RUSSIAN, AND TAJIK PRESIDENTS CONVENE IN DUSHANBE

REF: A. DUSHANBE 917
[1](#)B. DUSHANBE 712

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[1](#)1. (SBU) Summary: The presidents of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Russia descended on Dushanbe July 28-31 for bilateral and multilateral meetings, where they discussed energy, trade, security, military cooperation, and other issues. The most substantive news to emerge from the summit was a possible Russian commitment to pay Tajikistan for hosting the 201 Motorized Rifle Division. Presidents Rahmon and Medvedev participated in an opening ceremony for the Sangtuda-1 hydropower station. Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Tajikistan discussed cooperation on energy and trade issues, agreeing to look at ways to increase commerce between Central and South Asia. There were few unscripted moments in the tightly orchestrated summit. End summary.

[1](#)2. (SBU) The Pakistani delegation was the first to arrive last week. Although a small incendiary device exploded near the delegation's lodgings (ref A), the meetings were otherwise uneventful. (Note: There is so far no hard evidence to support speculation that the small explosions at the Hotel Tajikistan and the Dushanbe Airport early last week may have been intended to destabilize the summit. End note.) Rahmon and Pakistani President Ali Zardari agreed to launch direct air routes between Tajikistan and Pakistan, and Zardari said Pakistan would look into ways to help Tajikistan use the seaports at Karachi and Gwadar. Next to arrive were the Afghans. At a tripartite summit on July 30, Presidents Karzai, Zardari, and Rahmon reportedly focused primarily on energy and security. They discussed progress to date on the prospective Central Asia-South Asia (CASA-1000) electrical transmission line, as well as steps being taken to combat militants in all three countries. The following day Karzai attended a groundbreaking ceremony for a new Afghan embassy in Dushanbe.

[1](#)3. (SBU) The last to arrive was Russian President Medvedev, late on the afternoon of July 30. The next morning he and Rahmon attended an opening ceremony for the 670 Megawatt Sangtuda-1 hydropower station, a joint Russian-Tajik operation built by a Russian contractor. The station actually had begun operating at full capacity in May, though the Tajiks reportedly owed arrears totaling some \$20 million to the Russian operator. (Most media report that the Tajiks own 25% of the project, but according to local newspapers their ownership stake was earlier reduced to 16.45%). After hearing about Tajikistan's switch to

energy-saving lightbulbs (ref B), Medvedev agreed to launch a Tajik-Russian joint venture to produce the bulbs domestically.

14. (SBU) One of the more substantive issues to emerge during the summit concerned future military cooperation between Tajikistan and Russia. The Russians are reportedly considering paying Tajikistan for hosting the 6,800 members of the 201 Russian Motorized Rifle Division based in Dushanbe. In exchange, Russia is exploring weapons exports to Tajikistan at market prices, and training Tajik military staff on a commercial basis. Presidents Rahmon and Medvedev ordered Tajik Minister of Foreign Affairs Zarifi and Russian Minister of Defense Serdyukov to review the status of the base and report back in 45 days.

15. (SBU) During a July 31, press conference with all four presidents, Medvedev raised some eyebrows (and hopes) with his pledge that Russia would work with international financial institutions such as the World Bank to draw the attention of the G-8 and G-20 to regional problems such as energy generation and transmission. The subject of Tajikistan's recent draft legislation restricting the use of languages other than Tajik also came up during the discussions. While the real impetus behind the law remains murky, many here and in Russia had viewed it as a direct challenge to the use of Russian, which still prevails here in many official contexts. During meetings with Medvedev, however, Rahmon apparently promised to take another look at the draft to see how it might be revised. Despite harsh criticism in Russian media, the Russian delegation played down concern over the issue. Medvedev assistant Sergey Prikhodko told the press that Russia had no objections to the legislation because the Tajik Constitution designated Russian as the language of international communication in Tajikistan. The Russians and Tajiks pledged to continue their discussions on a

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range of issues at meeting in September.

16. (SBU) Comment: Very little in the way of unscripted moments or interesting atmospherics emerged over the course of the tightly controlled visits. Dushanbe residents were pleased and more than a little surprised to find that the streets remained open for much of the summit. According to an embassy source, the Russian presidential plane departed from Dushanbe airport laden with nuts and fruit from Tajikistan. "Why is Tajikistan subsidizing the Russian president's grocery purchases?" the source wondered. When they're free, even hot peppers are sweet, as the Russian saying goes.

End comment.

QUAST